
**COOPERATION WITH AGENCIES THAT ARE NOT IN THE STATEWIDE
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM AND WITH OTHER ENTITIES 4.8(b)(1)**

Vocational Rehabilitation continues to work with multiple agencies and entities throughout the state. A number of these cooperative ventures are tied to our expansion of self-employment opportunities and our increased emphasis on employer services. This includes direct contact with local, state and regional lenders to assist clients in self-employment business start-up. Listed below are the primary businesses, agencies and groups with whom we are currently working.

Business Information Centers (BIC) – Located in Bismarck and Grand Forks, the BICs provide consultation and resources for VR clients on various aspects of establishing and maintaining a business.

Small Business Administration (SBA) – Ongoing coordination of shared training and education programs between SBA staff and VR staff.

Department of Commerce and local economic development groups -- Resources for funding and business development for VR clients.

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) -- Provides mentoring and consultation to VR clients who are developing business plans.

Lewis and Clark Development Corporation - Process revolving loan fund applications for VR clients pursuing self-employment.

Developmental Disabilities Council – Periodically provides monies for the revolving loan fund.

North Dakota Department of Agriculture – Cooperative agreement to assist with VR's Rural Services initiative.

North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) – Occasionally provides monies to VR clients for non-employment related expenses.

North Dakota Chamber of Commerce -- Cooperative training and information exchange.

Bank of North Dakota -- Funding resource for start-up money and guaranteed loans for beginning entrepreneurs, including those who are VR clients.

Rocky Mountain Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) –
Provides technical assistance, resources, education and training on disability issues including the ADA.

Center of Technology and Business – Provides technical assistance to VR clients in developing Business and Marketing plans.

Vocational Rehabilitation also continues to maintain relationships with the following entities:

- Rural Development (USDA)
- Center for People with Disabilities, Minot State University
- Mayor's Committees on Employment of People with Disabilities
- Local chambers of commerce through regional staff membership
- Local service and community groups through regional staff membership

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

4.8(b)(2)

The Memorandum of Understanding for Transition Services was renewed January 1, 2007 and is in effect through June 30, 2011. Parties to the agreement are the Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education, Job Service North Dakota, the Department of Career and Technical Education and the Department of Human Services Children Special Health Services Unit and Disability Services Division - Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities. The MOU addresses many areas including: consultation and technical assistance, transition planning, roles and responsibilities including financial responsibilities of the agencies and outreach. Some of those activities are described below.

VR policy provides that Individualized Employment Plans are developed as soon as possible, but at least before the student leaves school. Since the actual service delivery takes place in the eight regions of the state each region has developed a regional transition committee and a regional transition plan. The plans are in various phases of implementation. The committees use a specific document for their planning process entitled: "*Essential Tools, Interagency Transition Team Development and Facilitation*" published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Training, OSEP. The use of this document is helping to better coordinate efforts.

The plans include the following elements: how transition activities will be implemented, the source and amount of funding needed, who is involved and their roles and responsibilities, and evaluation criteria. The Department of Public Instruction also contracts for services to track students with disabilities exiting secondary education, how many go to employment, how many enter post-secondary training, how many have other post-secondary plans and how many do not.

The statewide North Dakota Transition Steering Council has representation from each region and continues to be very active, holding quarterly meetings.

Vocational Rehabilitation has committed approximately \$40,000 per year per region to fund transition activities. The local education units, and other partners, may provide additional funds and resources.

In addition, transitioning students who are identified through the education unit's Section 504 coordinator are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation, and contacts are made with the guidance counselors to assure those with special needs are aware of services through Vocational Rehabilitation. Referrals are also received from independent living staff working with transition age students.

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation has a very good working relationship with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). We have attended National conferences bringing back information to be presented as a team at the state level. We have also partnered in putting together state transition conferences. The VR field services director with DPI's special services director have attended all of the 8 regional transition planning committees in the state. We are looking at the feasibility of doing some "regional" training during the upcoming biennium for VR & DPI staff, parents, partnering agencies & community advocates.

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NON-PROFIT VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION SERVICE PROVIDERS****4.8(b)(3)**

The utilization of community rehabilitation programs varies considerably throughout the state. In that needs and resources are unique to each region, it is up to the regional offices at the local level to work closely with their local providers to identify needs, and to determine with the provider whether or not they are able to meet that need.

Vocational Rehabilitation continues to utilize information gathered from public hearings as well input received from the providers themselves and organizations such as the North Dakota Association of Community Facilities and the North Dakota Statewide Independent Living Council work more closely together. The agency will continue to make every effort to improve services to consumers when a problem is identified in a particular region.

To insure ongoing dialogue, the North Dakota Association of Community Facilities and the North Dakota Independent Living Council is represented on the State Rehabilitation Council where issues are discussed whenever appropriate.

Cooperative relationships with providers involve development of the scope of services and working procedures. Rate compensation is developed in cooperation with Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse.

As a major player on the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, VR continues to be an active partner as opportunities arise. Currently, VR is on the Integrated Performance Information (IPI) workgroup.

Vocational Rehabilitation continues to survey providers for input regarding their training needs. The state also continues to use the Community Rehabilitation Program (RRCEP) in Colorado as a training resource when training needs are identified, including any training needs that may emerge as a result of provider outcome data.

In addition, standards will be established for facilities and providers of services used by the agency. Rehabilitation facilities must be certified either by CARF or The Council, formerly known as the Accreditation Council, or have an approved plan in place for acquiring accreditation. Medical service providers must be approved by the State Licensing Board through its agreement with the Department of Human Services. All educational and vocational technical programs must be recognized by the State Board of Higher Education.

The department has as part of its contract package, language that addresses accessibility of facilities, affirmative action plans, special communication needs, and fraud, waste, and abuse.

EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EXTENDED SERVICES	4.8(b)(4)
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Vocational Rehabilitation is purchasing services from sixteen private non-profit providers, one private-for-profit and one public agency for the provision of supported employment services and extended services. Representatives from Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health previously conducted regional visits to providers and regional staff. The purpose was to assess the program needs and funding requirements. Based on the results, new supported employment guidelines and payment methods have been under construction for quite some time. The document was finalized Spring 2007 and is supported by the State Rehabilitation Council. Plans are to implement the new guidelines and accompanying outcome-based reimbursement in FFY 2008.

Social Security work incentives too often act as disincentives for many clients with high medical costs to engage in competitive employment. VR is actively involved in a newly established statewide benefits planning workgroup to try to address this concern.

All units that purchase extended services fall under the administrative control of the North Dakota Department of Human Services, therefore a Memorandum of Agreement is not required. Representatives of the Division of Disability Services, which includes Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse will continue to meet periodically to review, develop and amend policies, procedures and fiscal issues.